

The Battle of the Sexes

Who holds the most nonfarm jobs in Utah—men or women? “Easy,” you say, “men.” And, you’d be right—except in Piute, Rich, Garfield, Kane, Wayne, Grand and San Juan counties. Oh, in Sanpete County women hold half the area’s nonfarm positions. Moreover, statewide, 46 percent (that’s almost half) of nonfarm employment is held by females.

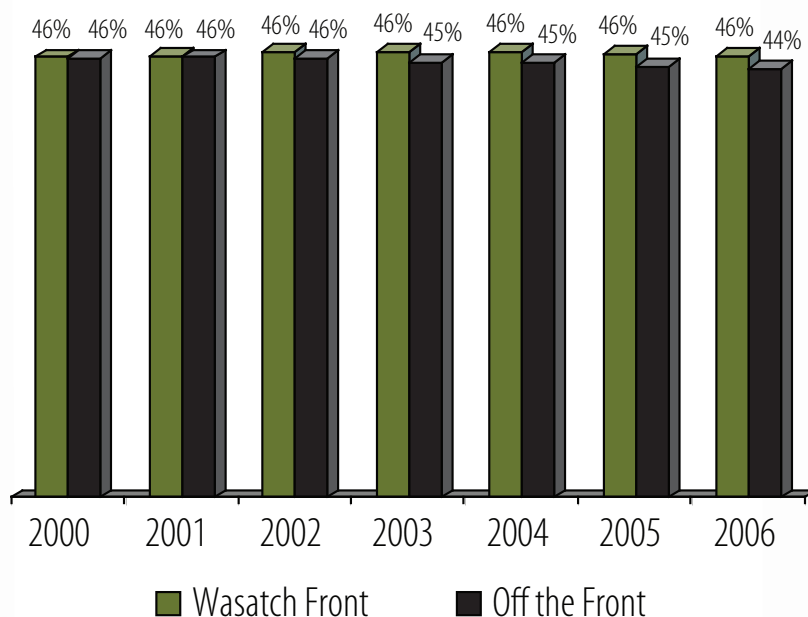
Why do these counties buck the norm? Interestingly, these female-dominated counties seem to cluster in two camps. Most (Garfield, Rich, Kane, Wayne, San Juan and Grand) have economies dominated by large leisure/hospitality (tourism) industries. On the other hand, Piute and Sanpete Counties show a comparatively large share of agricultural employment which isn’t captured by this administrative data.

Young Women Rock the Labor Market

When counties off the Wasatch Front are grouped together, females outnumbered males in the younger age groups (14-21 years old) during 2006. In Garfield County, more than 60 percent of the workers in this age group were females. However, this pattern of young women workers outnumbering young male workers holds up in the Wasatch Front counties, too.

Although an absence of a significant number of young men for missionary and military service probably cuts into the 19-21-year-old male counts, it fails to explain the higher numbers of young women in the 14-18-year-old group.

PERCENTAGE OF NONFARM JOBS HELD BY FEMALES



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Local Employment Dynamics.



Taking a Break

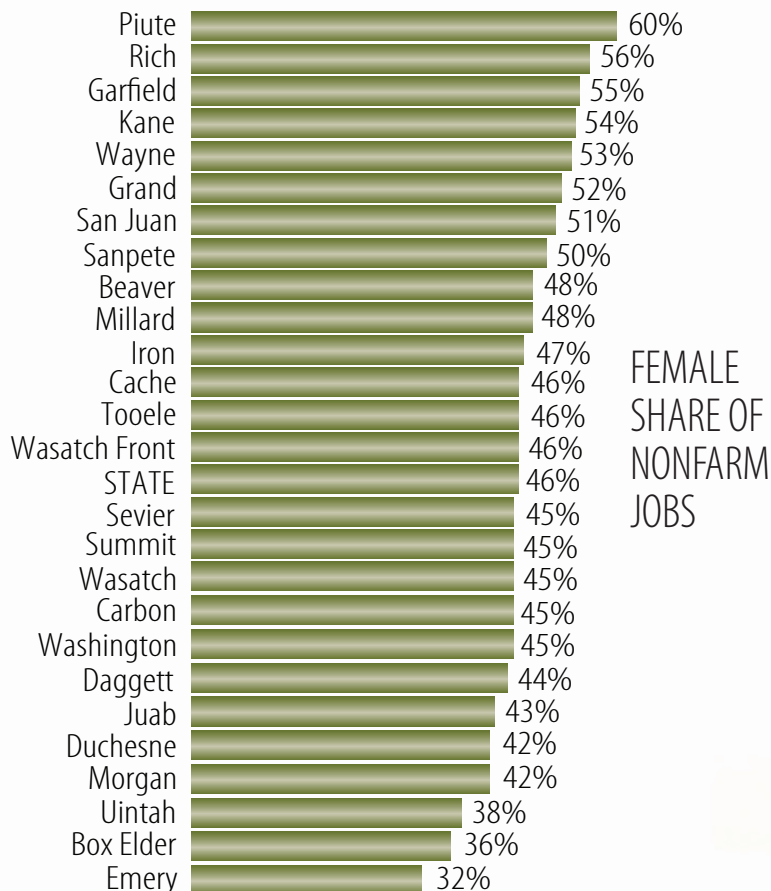
Perhaps the most striking difference between the counties on and off the Wasatch Front occurs in the 25-34-year-old age group. Of course, this is the time that many young mothers take a break from the labor force to raise children. For both sets of counties, the share of women workers in this cohort drops.

However, it declines much more dramatically in counties outside the Wasatch Front. In 2006, only 40 percent of workers aged 25-34 were women in non-Wasatch Front counties. The next lowest share was the 20-24-year-old category, at 43 percent.

Slip-Sliding Away

Finally, both sets of counties on and off the Front started the century with almost identical shares of female nonfarm job workers (45.7 and 45.6 percent respectively). However, by 2006 the Wasatch Front counties had seen a slight increase in the share of female workers (45.8 percent), but the non-Wasatch Front counties' share of female workers dropped significantly to 44.4 percent. This change seems to have occurred because of a larger-than-average influx of 19-21-year-old male workers and also significant growth in the types of industries that typically employ males—construction and mining. ①

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FEMALE
SHARE OF
NONFARM
JOBS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Local Employment Dynamics.